



U.S. History 8

Father of Our Country

EQ: What must a new nation accomplish to become stable? How did the New Republic respond to the challenges of the times? How does the visionary leadership of our Founding Fathers influence our lives today?

Targeted Skills:

Information Literacy:

- Collect Information
- diagrams

Communication:

- Writing/Speaking/Producing
 - inform
 - use appropriate content
 - specificity
 - elaboration

Enduring Understandings:

The visionary leadership of America's Founding Fathers produced a nation of stability and power.

Concepts Important to Know and Understand:

policies of early presidents, challenges facing the New Republic, effective leadership

Broad Brush Knowledge:

George Washington, precedents, domestic vs. foreign policy, Bank of the U.S., Farewell Address, Whiskey Rebellion, Federalists v. Democratic-Republicans, civic virtue

Core Objectives:

5. Describe the challenges confronted by the government and its leaders in the early years of the Republic.
23. Analyze the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society.

Instructions: Read the Expert Information and highlight important historical facts.

Expert Information: George Washington was the first president of the United States (1789-1797) and one of the most important leaders in United States history. His role in gaining independence for the American colonies and later unifying them under the new federal government was immeasurable.

Washington was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia on February 22, 1732. He later inherited Mount Vernon which is also in Virginia. He was married to Martha Custis and had two adopted children. He stood six feet two inches tall and weighed 175 pounds. His chin was pointed, he had pockmarks on his cheeks and nose from smallpox, and he had one remaining tooth at the time of his inauguration (swearing in as president). During his lifetime, he wore dentures made of human (some his own), cow, or hippopotamus teeth, ivory, or lead, but he never had wooden teeth. He had no formal education and considered himself to be a planter and soldier. Before becoming president, he was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, the Continental Congress, commander of the Continental Army, and chairman of the Constitutional Convention.

George Washington was the most revered man in the United States after the Revolutionary War. The war made him a hero to every American; therefore, he was the most natural choice for the presidency. He did not run for the office of the president, but was chosen by the Electoral College unanimously to hold the position. Washington preferred to live quietly at Mount Vernon but accepted the office of the presidency. He felt it was his **civic virtue** (obligation to take an active role in improving the community and the experiences of other members of the community) to serve the nation as the first president. To assume the office of the presidency, Washington left Mount Vernon to travel to New York City, the temporary capital. All along the way, flowers were strewn at his feet. Cannons roared, bells pealed, and people greeted him warmly. On April 30, 1789, on a balcony

overlooking Wall Street in New York City, George Washington was sworn in as the first president and John Adams was sworn in as vice-president.

Following his inauguration, Washington addressed both houses of Congress. At times his hands shook so that he had trouble reading his speech. He had reason to be nervous. The first Congress was divided. Some members wanted a strong national government, while others wanted to limit the power of the government. The first real debate was over what title to use when addressing the president. Washington settled this debate by saying he preferred the simple title of "**Mr. President.**"

Washington knew that as the first president he would set an example for others. Even though the Constitution provided a framework for the new government, it did not explain how the President should govern from day to day. Washington, therefore, had to make many new and important decisions. He said, "There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent." A **precedent is an act or decision that sets an example for others to follow.**

Washington brought a formality to the office of the president. Believing that shaking hands was beneath a president, he bowed to his visitors. He always wore his sword as part of his presidential attire. He and Martha would stand in a large room on a platform to greet people who had business with the president. He wore the latest gentleman fashions and he made sure to divide his day so there was time for Martha and the children. This was all a part of Washington's **leadership style** and it set a **precedent** for other presidents.

The Constitution does not mention a **cabinet**, but it gave Congress the powers to establish an executive department. Therefore, Congress created three departments in 1789. A **Department of State** was created to handle relations with other countries. Washington chose **Thomas Jefferson as the first Secretary of State**. A **Department of War** was established to defend the nation. Washington chose **Henry Knox as the first Secretary of War** (today this department is called the Department of Defense.) A **Department of the Treasury** was established to oversee the nation's finances. Washington chose **Alexander Hamilton to be the first Secretary of the Treasury**. Every president since has followed Washington's example and appointed cabinet members.

Every president including Washington faces two agendas while in office: **domestic policy** and **foreign policy**. **Domestic policy** covers the issues having to do **with home, the United States**. **Foreign policy** covers the issues having to do with **other countries**.

Domestic Policy: Drawing up a **bill of rights** headed the list of tasks facing the new government. This was a task that Washington left up to Congress and the leadership of James Madison. It also became necessary to organize the judicial branch of government. In 1789, Congress created effective federal courts under the **Judiciary Act**. The act set up the Supreme Court, with a chief justice and associate justices, as well as federal district and circuit courts, and established the office of attorney general. John Jay became the first chief justice of the United States. The most critical **domestic problem** facing the new nation was **money**. The national treasury was empty due to war debts of the American Revolution. As the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton introduced a financial plan to strengthen the nation's economy. He proposed three bills to Congress that would

1. raise money through taxes
2. create a national bank
3. promote protective tariffs

In order to win support for his financial plan from Congressional Southerners, Alexander Hamilton agreed to a compromise by locating the nation's capital in the South. A special district was created near the Potomac River and became known as Washington D.C. Congress then passed Hamilton's excise tax (a tax on the production or sale of a product) on whiskey and other "luxury" goods such as carriages. Settlers living west of the Appalachians protested the new tax. Western wheat and corn farmers found it too expensive to haul their grain across the mountains to sell in eastern cities. Instead, they distilled their wheat and corn into whiskey, which could be shipped more cheaply. Many farmers refused to pay the tax. In response the government did lower the tax in 1793, but a group of tax rebels in western Pennsylvania would not pay the tax. These "Whiskey Boys" tarred and feathered tax collectors that tried to collect the tax. Washington and Hamilton (Secretary of the Treasury) saw the **Whiskey Rebellion as a threat to the authority of the national government**. Washington decided to take matters into his own hands and led 13,000 state militia troops into western Pennsylvania to crush the rebellion. Most of the rebels fled, the others were captured and pardoned by Washington once they pledged their loyalty to the federal government. The Whiskey Rebellion was a serious challenge to the new nation's ability to enforce its laws. In that same year, Congress also created the Bank of the United States owned by the federal government and private investors for the collection of taxes and other federal monies. Other creations of the new government by the Congress was the establishment of the post Office and the New York Stock Exchange.

Political Parties began to emerge during Washington's first term of office due to different points of view on the powers of the federal government, the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, and economic and foreign policies. The two parties that developed were the **Federalist** and **Democratic-Republican**. The Federalists were the followers of Alexander Hamilton and the Democratic-Republicans supported Thomas Jefferson's ideas about government. The two political parties supported the following:

Federalist - Alexander Hamilton

- * strong national government
- * national bank
- * loose interpretation of the Constitution
- * supported by industrialists
- * protective tariffs
- * British alliance

Democratic-Republican - Thomas Jefferson

- * strong state government
- * state banks
- * strict interpretation of the Constitution
- * supported by farmers
- * free trade
- * French alliance

George Washington was not in favor of political parties and feared that they would divide the nation. He agreed to a second term as president because he was bothered by the growth of the parties. By serving two terms as president, he set the precedent of a president not serving more than two terms for years to come.

Foreign Policy: Washington realized that any involvement with other countries would only hurt the United States and its fragile state of affairs. The country could not afford to poke its nose in where it did not belong. In 1793, a war broke out between France and Britain. Many Americans wanted the U.S. to help the French because they helped the colonists in the Revolution, but other Americans felt closer economic and family ties to the British. Washington solved the issue by declaring the U.S. **neutral** (not taking either side).

One issue between the U.S. and Britain concerned British presence in the Ohio River Valley. British forts had not yet been evacuated after the revolution. Washington sent John Jay to Britain to discuss the situation. In 1795, **Jay's Treaty** was ratified (approved), and British troops were required to withdraw from the U.S.

Britain and France were not the only foreign problems for the U.S. Spanish Florida was also a concern. Washington sent Thomas Pinckney to Spain to reduce tensions. In 1795, **Pinckney's Treaty** with Spain gave Americans the right to travel freely on the Mississippi River. It also gave them the right to store goods at the port of New Orleans without paying custom duties. In addition, Spain agreed to the 31st parallel as the northern boundary of Florida and the southern boundary of the United States.

Washington decided not to seek a third term as president. **Serving two terms was a precedent.** Throughout his eight years in office, he tried to serve as a symbol of national unity. Before leaving office he did two things. One was to pose for a portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart that now appears on the dollar bill. The other was to give a **Farewell Address, another precedent.** Washington warned against three things in his Farewell Address.

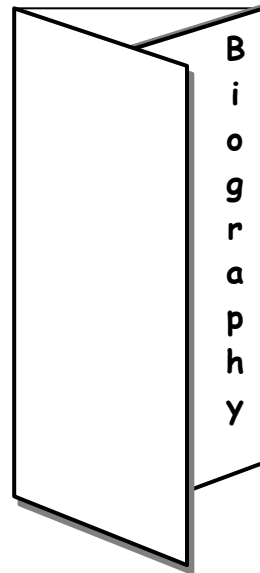
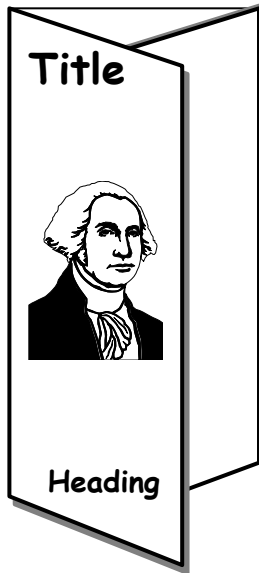
1. He warned against **the formation of political parties.** Washington believed such political disagreements would divide and weaken the country.
2. He **urged the nation's leaders to remain neutral** and "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." His policy of **neutrality**, guided U.S. foreign policy into the 20th century.
3. He mentioned the need to **keep taxes reasonable.** He did not feel it was good to overtax the American people.

Despite his worries, Washington had reason to be proud when he left office. The new government was up and running. The nation was growing so fast that it had added three new states. Most of all, Washington had steered his government safely through some rough times. He left the nation united and at peace.

Washington returned to his beloved Mount Vernon in 1797, but died just two years later of a throat infection. At his funeral, Henry Lee, of Virginia said, "In the memory of the Man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Many places are named after Washington including the nation's capital, the state, 31 counties and 17 communities.

Instructions:

1. Create a trifold booklet about *George Washington* using the Expert Information and the directions below.
2. Fold a sheet of paper (8 ½" by 11") into thirds.
3. On the front cover of your book, cut out the image of *George Washington* from the last page of this packet.
4. Glue or tape the picture on the front of the trifold book.
5. Create your own title for this book and put a complete heading in the bottom right-hand corner.
6. Open the book to reveal the three sections.
7. The first section should be titled **Washington's Domestic & Foreign Policies** (five details, historical evidence).
8. The middle section should be titled **Development of Political Parties** (five details, historical evidence).
9. The third section should be titled **Washington's Precedents** (five details, historical evidence).
10. The back cover of the book should be titled **Biography** (include personal details about Washington).



Washington's Domestic & Foreign Policies	Development of Political Parties	Washington's Precedents

